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OR

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THE IRISH IN LONDON.

THEY say there are thirty thousand of us in London, and our own estimate does not abate an unit of the number—certainly we swarm every where, and wheresoever we are planted, like our own potato, we do exceedingly increase and multiply. 'Twas but the other day that we ventured to peep up a long narrow passage, with small houses on either side, a cul de sac, leading out of the street which connects the end of Oxford-street with the church of St. Giles. It seemed to us that we saw about a thousand children of all ages, from three years to thirteen, tumbling about in various directions and diversions, and vociferating to one another in the true Mononian dialect. We thought of Malthus, and shut our eyes. We defy an Irishman in London to forget his country, even if disposed thereto, which indeed they seldom are, as those who do not remember it for praise, keep it in mind as a fertile subject of abuse; but in any case he could not forget it, since from the makers of speeches of living eloquence in the House of Parliament, to the readers of speeches of dying penitence, falsely purporting to have been uttered at the front of Newgate, the loudest and most conspicuous are all Irish. It is a matter of marvel, and of national congratulation, that so few Irish are hanged in London—of all manner of whimsical and riotous offences on their part, there is, indeed, no end, inasmuch that some of the police offices on a Monday morning, would, as we are told, almost cheat one into the belief, that we were in some magistrates' office of the peaceful realm of Tipperary, on the day after a fair or "pattern;" but these are all trifling matters of broken heads or the like, arising out of liquor, or of love, which comes to the same thing, as it is all intoxication: but the horrible deliberate offences—the premeditated plundering in the night—the cutting of old womens' throats from ear to ear, and the cautious scrutiny, with the still reeking fingers, of the old woman's pouches, until each sovereign and sixpence is carefully extracted—all this part of this strange world's business, is in London generally left to the cooler habits of the natives. It sometimes happens, indeed, doubtless from the national confusion of character, such as Mr. Moore prettily speaks of, with reference to a letter of his to Lord Byron, wherein he appears partly desirous of his lordship's friendship, and partly desirous of putting him to death—that our countrymen forget the minute distinctions of property which prevail in England, and, in a sudden unreflecting moment, appropriate to themselves certain small matters which they suppose they stand in need of, without the ordinary preliminary arrangement of an exchange of coin for the same.

Such trifling peccadilloes, merely evince a want of sufficient acquaintance with the grammatical construction of the possessive pronouns.

Old Johnson said that learning the Latin grammar forms a principal epoch in the earlier stages of man's existence. To be sure it does. Though eaten-bread (*Qy. Eton-bred?*) is soon forgotten, the knowledge of *meum* and *tuum* sticks to a philologist through life.

These little mistakes, and taking ways of our countrymen, frequently occupy the attention of certain sessional tribunals in Comitatu Middlesexie, and sometimes the oddest instances of national character, of simplicity, and absurdity and humour and pathos, that can possibly be supposed, are brought out at these trials. The strangest thing of all, to an Irishman, is, that the London Judges and Juries, and Barristers, seem to have no notion of, no sympathy with, these curious peculiarities: they see nothing in them but absurdity, and view with mingled contempt and compassion, that which would convulse us with laughter, or make the tears flow to our eyes. Among the whimsical notions of the poor exiles from Munster and Connaught who swarm in London, is the one, that the punishment which the law awards for offences, is the payment or compensation which they are required to make, when unluckily an offence is detected; and this notion gives them frequently very strong impressions of the disproportion between the crime committed, and the penalty inflicted.

A man was tried, not very long ago, at the old Bailey, for stealing a piece of meat from a butcher's shop; he was convicted, and the Judge sentenced him to be imprisoned for six months. "Arrah how long, my lord?" said the culprit, looking up at the Judge, with an air of incredulous surprise—"For six months, prisoner."

"By J—thin, it was a dear bit of mate," said the poor prisoner casting down his eyes, in utter astonishment and dismay, that eighteen pence worth of beef, should have been thought worth so long an imprisonment. He measured his offence precisely by the value of what he had taken, and felt his sentence to be an unjust one.

It is in a place such as London, where the mass is enormous, and the variety of pursuits almost infinite, that we can best trace the national peculiarities of the several nations which send their inhabitants to the mighty congregation, by comparing the relative positions which they take up. Looking at the occupations of the Irish in London, we shall be led at once to conclude, that a mental and bodily activity—an aptitude for quick exertion of the faculties of mind or body, marked them for the peculiar services in which they are engaged. We do not mean this exactly in the flattering sense to our countrymen, that might at first sight be supposed—we do not mean that they possess this vigorous quickness, in addition to an equal quantity of other good qualities with the people among whom they are placed—but instead of these qualities—instead of regularity, precision, steadiness, and calmness, they have this

capability for a kind of exertion which the English are either incapable of, or are unwilling to submit to. "Not only all the porters in London," said some smart person, "but all the re-porters also, are Irish." This is much more true of the latter class, than the former. When a man is wanted to deliver valuable parcels, exactness and "good security," are requisites more important than despatch, and then an Englishman is employed, and you recognise him by his apron, and his thick-soled boots, his pace of two miles an hour, and a piece of bread and cheese in his hand, and thus—

He munches as he goes, for want of thought.

But if you see a man with a burthen getting quickly along, and getting out of *peoples' way*, sometimes stepping off the foot-way, and sometimes on it again, with his stockings rather loose, and a coat which once was a gentleman's coat, hanging, as I have heard a fellow say, in *geometry* upon him—that man you may be quite sure is Irish. Whenever a house has been burned, and is required to be replaced in a hurry—when a sewer is to be built, the building of which blocks up the street, and therefore is wrought at night and day, by sun-light and torch-light, till it is finished—every labourer of them is talking Irish. For this the rogues are often well paid; but they never get rich, and hardly even comfortable, in the sense in which the English properly understand this word. Our Irish labourer hardly ever increases his store of anything but children and perplexities—a non-accumulative curse seems to cling to him with respect to all other things; he works, drinks, loves, laughs, fights, and dies—and there's an end—no: not an end altogether; for his lineage is sure to survive, in seventeen sons and daughters. Of the three duties of a man in this world, as laid down by master Larry Sterne, of Clonmel, in the county of Tipperary, an Irish labourer in London generally has a share in the first, and is quite sure to fulfil the last.

The women seem as much inclined to the sedentary occupations by which a small livelihood may be obtained, as the men are to the more active. We have held very interesting colloquies with about fifty-five thousand of the female apple and orange venders, who occupy the corners of the streets in London, and we never met with a single exception to the rule of their being all from Munster. We love to ask them, as the first question, "What part of Munster do you come from?" "County Cork, Sir," or "County Limrick, your honner," is almost sure to be the answer; and not seldom, when we have beguiled them into talk about the Shannon, or Kilworth Mountain, or the like, we have observed that something very like tears began to flow, and our sixpence would hardly be taken, without an effort to make us have more than the worth of it in fruit.

As to the re-porters, whom, for such important gentlemen, we have rather unceremoniously forgotten, and therefore intreat the condescension of their pardon, they are almost as uniformly Irish as the applewomen; and a clever, dashing, rattling set of fellows they are, and indeed must be, in order to get through their arduous duties. But, why are they almost exclusively Irish? Because there is a bustle, a hurry, an energetic dispatch, necessary about this business—a dashing off-hand way, without being too particular as to exactness, and with a ready fancy for *guessing*, for all of which the national character is peculiarly fitted. Again, there is a something *literary*, as it is thought, about it, and we, Irish, are so desperately literary every where but at home.

Every one knows that those who write for daily newspapers must have a rapid method of arranging and expressing their thoughts upon the revolving occurrences of every day life. Well—this work is in London almost monopolized by the Irish. The Standard, Globe, Courier, Star, Morning Herald, Saint James's Chronicle, Atlas, and a score of others for aught we know, are edited by Irishmen. They “knock off a paragraph,” while a sober Englishman would be thinking of the best “references,” and it does very well. The Times, to be sure, seems often as if it had the aid of the heavy machinery of the steam-engine, in writing its articles as well as in printing them, but we are told there are none but English and Scotch about the writing department of that concern.

We wish we could add the praise of *independence* to our notice of the Irish character in London, but we cannot. The Irish labourer submits to what the English labourer would not, and thereby entails a degree of contempt upon his class. We heard a shopkeeper in Cheapside, asked once, why he employed an Irishman for his shop-porter, rather than a Londoner. “Why,” said he, “I can do what I please with Pat, there, and I couldn't do so with one of our fellows. When he shuts up the shop, I tell him to make his bed under the counter there, and so he does, and there he lays, and takes care of the shop, and he's quite at hand to open it in the morning. I couldn't get an Englishman to do that.” We felt rather uncomfortable to hear a man talk this way.—“Is thy servant a dog,” that thou shouldst use him thus?

The great difference between the Irish and English, and the great superiority of the latter in all mere matters of business, seems to consist in this, that they possess a methodical steadiness of procedure, arising out of a complete concentration of the mind upon the one idea that occupies it for the time, which is utterly unknown to our countrymen. Send an English servant of a message, and were it only for a shilling's worth of cheese, he looks neither to the right hand nor to the left, but plods steadily on, with cheese in all his thoughts, till he has secured and deposited in your cupboard, the wished-for Parmesan. The Irishman, on the contrary, would stare into every shop window, and listen to every fiddler and piper on the way, and possibly come back tipsy, with Stilton or Glo'ster instead.

As for the higher occupations, they say in London, that we Irish are too much a kind of literary Swiss, and will write on any side for payment. Perhaps there is something too much of this, but it is not confined to the Irish—except that it must be admitted the careless

habits of the Irish generally, make them the poorest class, and poverty is open to all manner of temptations. This, however, is rather an uncomfortable part of our subject, and therefore here we shall pause for the present.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus.
By Washington Irving.—(Abridged by the same.)—Being the 11th Vol. of the Family Library. 12mo. London, Murray, 1830.

THE discovery of America is an event which appears ever new—the relation of it never wears. Whether it be perused in the antiquated style of the first narrator, or in the many versions through which its romantic incidents have been transferred from generation to generation to the present day, it still rivets attention. The narrative now before us has peculiar charms; it combines the elegancies of the imagination with the sterling solidity of truth. Seldom has a writer, long accustomed to wander uncontrolled through the fairy enchantments of fiction, entered upon the beaten path of rigid facts with so good a grace. The reader is led along through the series of wonderful events, with a rapidity and ease not often enjoyed by those who prefer the study of historical realities to the fascinating delusions of romance.

With the great leading facts of the life of Columbus, every reader is acquainted. These, of course, we pass over, though far from being devoid of interest. We would rather dwell a little on two great moral pictures this work affords; one exhibiting the corruptions, the selfishness, the meanness, the tortuous deviations from rectitude, the destitution of moral feeling in the higher orders of society, during that period, as displayed in the treatment of Columbus, by kings and courtiers;—we hope we now live in better days:—the other, the undeviating magnanimity with which this great man bore up against the incessant storms of persecution, with which he was assailed from the first moment of the announcement of his gigantic project, till the close of his life. Surely it requires to be told over and over again, in order to be credited, that the individual who laid the wealth of half the world at the foot of the throne of Spain, lived in trouble, and died in sorrow and distress. We wish we could extract at length the affecting picture of this great and ill-treated man's last struggle against his persevering enemies. Disappointed in his hope of being restored, by means of repeated written applications, to the honors and wealth to which he was entitled by services and compact, he determined on a journey to the Spanish court, then held at Segovia. “He, who a few years before had entered the city of Barcelona in triumph, attended by the chivalry of Spain, and hailed with rapture by the multitude, now arrived at the gates of Segovia, a wayworn, melancholy, and neglected man; oppressed even more by sorrow, than by his years and infirmities.”—Ferdinand, (for his great protectress, Isabella, was now no more,) received him with many professions of kindness, “but with those cold, ineffectual smiles, which pass like wintry sunshine over the countenance, and convey no warmth to the heart.” Many months were passed by Columbus in painful and humiliating solicitation. He endeavoured to bear those delays with patience, but he had no longer the

physical strength and the glorious anticipations, which had once sustained him through his long application at this court. He was again confined to his bed by a return of the gout, aggravated by the irritations of his spirit. From his couch of anguish he addressed one more appeal to the justice of the king; he no longer petitioned for himself, but for his son, Diego.—He entreated that his child might be appointed to the government of which he himself had been so wrongfully deprived.

This petition was treated by Ferdinand, with his usual evasions; he even endeavoured to prevail on Columbus, to waive his claims to the dignities to which he was entitled in the New World, and to accept in lieu thereof, titles and estates in Spain. Columbus rejected the proposal with indignation, and from the bed on which he was confined, addressed a letter to his constant friend, the Archbishop of Seville, expressive of his despair. This was his last effort. His illness, the effect of combined sufferings of mind and body, increased with irresistible violence; he settled his worldly affairs, resigned himself to his God, and expired. Such was the end of the discoverer of half the world!—Thanks be to Solomon, or to him who inspired Solomon rather, who has prepared us to bear up during the recital of such a heart-sickening detail of courtly ingratitude and perfidy, when he warns us, in the book of Proverbs, not to put our trust in kings.

To dwell upon the style of Washington Irving, would be little better than loss of time. His writings are now in every body's hands.—Next to Walter Scott, he is, perhaps, the best known, and the most generally sought after, among the writers of works of imagination, and we have already said, that he has here given his fancy free play, as far as language is concerned, without prejudicing the cause of historical veracity. Yet the manner in which he contrasts the commencement of Columbus's first expedition, when all was doubt and apprehension, and alarm, with his subsequent departure from Spain, after he had realized the object of his golden anticipations, is too striking to be passed over. The former of these events is thus described:—

“When Columbus arrived at Palos, and presented himself once more before the gates of the convent of La Rabida, he was received with open arms by the worthy Juan Perez, and again entertained as his guest. The zealous friar accompanied him to the parochial church of St. George, in Palos, where Columbus caused the royal order for the caravals to be read by a notary public, in presence of the authorities of the place. Nothing could equal the astonishment and horror of the people of this maritime community, when they heard of the nature of the expedition, in which they were ordered to engage. They considered the ships and crews demanded of them in the light of sacrifices devoted to destruction. All the frightful tales and fables with which ignorance and superstition are prone to people obscure and distant regions were conjured up concerning the unknown parts of the deep, and the boldest seamen shrunk from such a wild and chimerical cruise into the wilderness of the ocean.

“Repeated mandates were issued by the sovereigns, ordering the magistrates of Palos, and the neighbouring town of Moguer, to press into the service any Spanish vessels and crews they might think proper, and threatening severe